AN ESSAY

Towards Preventing the

RUINE

OF

GREAT BRITAIN.

Avaritia fidem, probitatem, cæteraſque bonas artes Subvertit. pro his ſuperbiam, crudelitatem, Deos negligere, omnia venalia habere edocuit. Salluſt.

Ii qui per largitionem magiſtratus adepti ſunt, dederunt operam ut ita poteſtatem gererent, ut illam lacunam rei familiaris explerent. Cicero.

Omnes, aut de honoribus ſuis, aut de præmiis pecuniæ, aut de perſequendis inimicis agebant. Cæſar.

LONDON,
Printed: And Sold by J. ROBERTS, in *Warwick-Lane*. MDCCXXI. [Price 6*d*.]

AN

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AN ESSAY ON METHODS *for preventing the Ruine of* GREAT-BRITAIN.

SINCE it hath pleaſed God to viſit this Land, and make us feel the fatal Effects of our Corruption and Folly, it ſhould be our care to profit by this Judgment, and make it an occaſion of our Reformation rather than of our final Ruin. Sure it is, if we had been ſuffered to go on, a few Years longer, in that full tide of Proſperity, which hath already ſo bewitched and debauched the Nation, we muſt have irretrievably undone our ſelves, and grown the ſame vile corrupt Slaves, with thoſe whoſe Vices and Follies we have ſo eagerly copied: whereas if warned by our preſent Calamities, we ſeriouſly reflect on the Cauſes that led to them, and remove them by a contrary Conduct, we may ſtill become a greater and more flouriſhing People than ever; it being as evident, both from Reaſon and Experi-

ence, that Induſtry, Sobriety of Manners, and the Fear of God build up and preſerve a People, as that Vice and Irreligion ruin them. It is therefore heartily to be wiſhed that our Legiſlature would, as they love their Country, think of effectual methods for reſtoring and promoting *Religion*, *Induſtry*, *Frugality*, and *Public Spirit*, which ever were, and ever will be, the only ſure Foundation of public Happineſs and Proſperity.

RELIGION hath in former days been cheriſhed and reverenced by wiſe Patriots and Lawgivers, as knowing it to be impoſſible, that a Nation ſhould thrive and flouriſh without Virtue, or that Virtue ſhould ſubſiſt without Conſcience, or Conſcience without Religion: inſomuch, that an Atheiſt or Infidel was looked on with Abhorrence, and treated as an Enemy to his Country. But in theſe wiſer times, a cold Indifference for the national Religion, and indeed for all matters of Faith and divine Worſhip, is thought good Senſe. It is even become faſhionable to decry Religion; and that little talent of Ridicule is applied to ſuch wrong purpoſes, that a good Chriſtian can hardly keep himſelf in Countenance.

Liberty is the greateſt humane Bleſſing that a virtuous Man can poſſeſs, and is very conſiſtent with the Duties of a good Subject and a good Chriſtian. But the preſent Age aboundeth with injudicious Patrons of Liberty,

who,

who, not diſtinguiſhing between that and Licentiouſneſs, take the ſureſt Method to diſcredit what they would ſeem to propagate. For, in effect, can there be a greater Affront offered to that juſt freedom of Thought and Action, which is the Prerogative of a Rational Creature, or can any thing recommend it leſs to honeſt Minds, than under Colour thereof to obtrude Scurrility and Profaneneſs on the World? But it hath been always obſerved of weak Men, that they know not how to avoid one Extream without running into another.

Too many of this ſort paſs upon vulgar Readers for great Authors and Men of profound Thought, not on account of any Superiority either in Senſe or Style, both which they poſſeſs in a very moderate degree, nor of any Diſcoveries they have made in Arts or Sciences, which they ſeem to be little acquainted with: but purely becauſe they flatter the Paſſions of corrupt Men, who are pleaſed to have the clamours of Conſcience ſilenced, and thoſe great points of the Chriſtian Religion made ſuſpected which withheld them from many vices of Pleaſure and Intereſt, or made them uneaſy in the commiſſion of them.

In order to promote that laudable deſign of effacing all Senſe of Religion from among us, they form themſelves into Aſſemblies, and proceed with united Counſels and Endeavours. With what Succeſs, and with what Merit towards the Public, the Effects too plainly

ſhew. I will not ſay, theſe Gentlemen have formed a direct deſign to ruin their Country, or that they have the Senſe to ſee half the ill Conſequences, which muſt neceſſarily flow from the ſpreading of their Opinions. But the Nation feels them, and it is high time the Legiſlature put a ſtop to them.

I am not for placing an invidious Power in the Hands of the Clergy, or complying with the Narrowneſs of any miſtaken Zealots, who ſhould incline to perſecute Diſſenters: but whatever Conduct, common Senſe as well as Chriſtian Charity obligeth us to uſe, towards thoſe who differ from us in ſome points of Religion, yet the public Safety requireth, that the avowed Contemners of all Religion ſhould be ſeverely chaſtiſed. And, perhaps, it may be no eaſy matter to aſſign a good reaſon, why Blaſphemy againſt God ſhould not be inquired into and puniſhed with the ſame rigour as Treaſon againſt the King.

For in fine, we may attempt to patch up our Affairs: but it will be to no purpoſe. The Finger of God will unravel all our vain Projects, and make them Snares to draw us into greater Calamities; if we do not reform that ſcandalous Libertiniſm, which (whatever ſome ſhallow Men may think) is our worſt Symptome and the ſureſt Prognoſtic of our Ruin.

IN-

INDUSTRY is the natural ſure way to Wealth. This is ſo true, that it is impoſſible an induſtrious free People ſhould want the Neceſſaries and Comforts of Life, or an idle enjoy them under any form of Government. Money is ſo far uſeful to the Public, as it promoteth Induſtry; and Credit having the ſame effect, is of the ſame value with Money. But Money or Credit circulating thorough a Nation from Hand to Hand, without producing Labour and Induſtry in the Inhabitants, is direct Gaming.

It is not impoſſible for cunning Men to make ſuch plauſible Schemes, as may draw thoſe who are leſs skilful into their own and the public Ruin. But ſurely, there is no Man of Senſe and Honeſty but muſt ſee and own, whether he underſtands the Game or not, that it is an evident Folly for any People, inſtead of proſecuting the old honeſt methods of Induſtry and Frugality, to ſit down to a public Gaming Table, and play off their Mony one to another.

The more Methods there are in a State for acquiring Riches without Induſtry or Merit, the leſs there will be of either in that State, This is as evident as the Ruin that attends it. Beſides, when Mony is ſhifted from Hand to Hand in ſuch a blind fortuitous manner, that ſome Men ſhall from nothing in an inſtant acquire vaſt Eſtates without the leaſt deſert: while others are as ſuddenly ſtript of plentiful Fortunes, and left on the Pariſh by their

own

own Avarice and Credulity: what can be hoped for on the one hand, but abandoned Luxury and Wantonneſs; or on the other, but extream Madneſs and Deſpair?

In ſhort, all Projects for growing rich by ſudden and extraordinary methods, as they operate violently on the Paſſions of Men, and encourage them to deſpiſe the ſlow moderate Gains that are to be made by an honeſt Induſtry, muſt be ruinous to the Public; and even the Winners themſelves will at length be involved in the Public Ruine.

It is an eaſy matter to contrive Projects for the Encouragement of Induſtry; I wiſh it were as eaſy to perſwade Men to put them in practice. There is no Country in *Europe* where there is ſo much Charity collected for the Poor, and none where it is ſo ill managed. If the Poor Tax was fixed at a medium in every Pariſh, taken from a Calculation of the laſt ten Years, and raiſed for ſeven Years by Act of Parliament, that Sum (if the common Eſtimate be not very wrong) frugally and prudently laid out in Work-houſes, would for ever free the Nation from the care of providing for the Poor, and at the ſame time conſiderably improve our Manufactures. We might by theſe means rid our Streets of Beggars; even the Children, the Maimed, and the Blind might be put in a way of doing ſomething for their livelyhood. As for the ſmall number of thoſe, who by Age or Infirmities, are utterly incapable of all Employment, they might be maintained by the Labour of others. And the

Public would receive no ſmall advantage from the Induſtry of thoſe, who are now ſo great a Burthen and Expence to it.

The ſame Tax, continued three Years longer, might be very uſefully employed in making high Roads, and rendering Rivers Navigable, two things of ſo much Profit and Ornament to a Nation, that we ſeem the only People in *Europe* who have neglected them. So that in the Space of ten Years the Public may be for ever freed from a heavy Tax, Induſtry encouraged, Commerce facilitated, and the whole Country improved. And all this only by a frugal honeſt Management, without raiſing one Penny extraordinary.

The Number of People is both Means and Motive to Induſtry, it ſhould therefore be of great uſe to encourage Propagation, by allowing ſome Reward or Privilege to thoſe who have a certain number of Children; And, on the other hand, enacting that the Public ſhall inherit the unentailed Eſtates of all who die unmarried of either Sex.

Beſide the immediate End propoſed by the foregoing methods, they furniſh Taxes upon Paſſengers, and dead Batchelors, which are in no ſort grievous to the Subject, and may be applied towards clearing the public Debt: which, all Mankind agree, highly concerneth the Nation in general, both Court and Country. *Cæſar*, indeed, mentions it as a piece of Policy, that he borrowed Mony from his Officers

cers to beſtow it on the Soldiers, which fixed both to his Intereſt. And tho' ſomething like this may paſs for Skill at certain junctures in Civil Government, yet if carried too far it will prove a dangerous Experiment.

There is ſtill room for Invention or Improvement in moſt Trades and Manufactures; and it is probable, that Premiums given on that account to ingenious Artiſts would ſoon be repayed a hundred-fold to the Public. No Colour is ſo much worn in *Italy*, *Spain*, and *Portugal* as Black: but our black Cloth is neither ſo laſting nor of ſo good a Dye as the *Dutch*; which is the reaſon of their engroſſing the Profits of that Trade. This is ſo true, that I have known *Engliſh* Merchants abroad wear black Cloth of *Holland* themſelves, and ſell and recommend it as better than that of their own Country. It is commonly ſaid the Water of *Leyden* hath a peculiar property for colouring Black. But it hath been alſo ſaid and paſſed current, that good Glaſſes could be made no where but at *Venice*, and there only in the little Iſland of *Morano*: which was attributed to ſome peculiar property in the Air. And we may poſſibly find other Opinions of that ſort to be as groundleſs, ſhould the Legiſlature think it worth while to propoſe Premiums in the foregoing or the like caſes of general Benefit to the Public. But I remember to have ſeen, about ſeven Years ago, a Man pointed at in a Coffee-houſe, who (they ſaid) had firſt introduced the right Scarlet Dye among us; by which the Nation in general, as well as many private Perſons, have ſince been great Gainers; tho'

tho' he was himſelf a Beggar; who, if this be true, deſerved an honourable Maintenance from the Public.

There are alſo ſeveral Manufactures which we have from abroad, that may be carried on to as great Perfection here as elſewhere. If it be conſidered that more fine Linnen is worn in *Great Britain* than in any other Country of *Europe*, it will be difficult to aſſign a Reaſon why Paper may not be made here as good, and in the ſame quantity, as in *Holland*, or *France*, or *Genoa*. This is a Manufacture of great conſumption, and would ſave much to the Public. The like may be ſaid of Tapeſtry, Lace, and other Manufactures, which if ſet on foot in cheap parts of the Country, would employ many hands, and ſave Mony to the Nation, as well as bring it from abroad. Projects for improving old Manufactures, or ſetting up new ones, ſhould not be deſpiſed in a trading Country: But the making them pretences for Stockjobbing hath been a fatal Impoſition.

As Induſtry dependeth upon Trade, and this, as well as the public Security, upon our Navigation, it concerneth the Legiſlature to provide that the number of our Sailors do not decreaſe. To which it would very much conduce, if a Law were made prohibiting the Payment of Sailors in Foreign Ports: for it is uſual with thoſe on board Merchant-men, as ſoon as they ſet foot aſhore to receive their Pay, which is ſoon ſpent in riotous living. And when they have emptied their Pockets,

the temptation of a Piſtole preſent Mony never faileth to draw them into any Foreign Service. To this (if I may credit the Information I have had from ſome *Engliſh* Factors abroad) it is chiefly owing, that the *Venetians*, *Spaniards*, and others, have ſo many *Engliſh* on board their Ships. Some Merchants indeed and Maſters of Veſſels may make a Profit in defrauding thoſe poor Wretches, when they pay them in ſtrange Coin (which I have been aſſured often amounts to twelve-pence in the Crown) as well as in ridding themſelves of the Charge of keeping them when they ſell their Ships, or ſtay long in Port. But the Public loſeth both the Mony and the Men, who, if their Arrears were to be cleared at home, would be ſure to return, and ſpend them in their own Country. It is a ſhame this abuſe ſhould not be remedied.

FRUGALITY of Manners is the Nouriſhment and Strength of Bodies Politic. It is that by which they grow and ſubſiſt, till they are corrupted by Luxury, the natural cauſe of their decay and ruine. Of this we have Examples in the *Perſians*, *Lacedæmonians* and *Romans*: not to mention many later Governments which have ſprung up, continued a while, and then periſhed by the ſame natural Cauſes. But theſe are it ſeems of no uſe to us: and, in ſpight of them, we are in a fair way of becoming our ſelves another uſeleſs Example to future Ages.

Men

Men are apt to measure national Prosperity by Riches: it would be righter to measure it by the Use that is made of them. Where they promote an honest Commerce among Men, and are Motives to Industry and Virtue, they are without doubt of great advantage. But where they are made (as too often happens) an Instrument to Luxury, they enervate and dispirit the bravest People. So just is that Remark of *Machiavel's*, that there is no truth in the common Saying, *Mony is the Nerves of War*. And tho' we may subsist tolerably for a time among corrupt Neighbours, yet if ever we have to do with a hardy, temperate, religious sort of Men, we shall find, to our cost, that all our Riches are but a poor exchange for that Simplicity of Manners which we despise in our Ancestors. This sole advantage hath been the main support of all those Republics that have made a figure in the World: and perhaps it might be no ill Policy in a Kingdom to form it self upon the Manners of a Republic.

Simplicity of Manners may be more easily preserved in a Republic than a Monarchy; but, if once lost, may be sooner recovered in a Monarchy, the Example of a Court being of great Efficacy, either to reform or corrupt a People. That alone were sufficient to discountenance the wearing of Gold or Silver, either on Cloaths or Equipages. And if the same were prohibited by Law, the saving so much Bullion would be the smallest Benefit of such an Institution;

there being nothing more apt to debaſe the Virtue and good Senſe of our Gentry of both Sexes, than that trifling vanity of Apparel, which we have learned from *France*, and which hath had ſuch viſible ill Conſequences on the Genius of that People. Wiſer Nations have made it their Care to ſhut out this folly by ſevere Laws and Penalties. And its ſpreading among us can forebode no good, if there be any truth in the Obſervation of one of the Ancients, that *the direct way to ruine a Man is to dreſs him up in fine Cloaths.*

It cannot be denied that Luxury of Dreſs giveth a light Behaviour to our Women, which may paſs for a ſmall Offence, becauſe it is a common one, but is, in truth, the ſource of great Corruptions. For this very Offence the Prophet *Iſaiah* denounced a ſevere Judgment againſt the Ladies of his time. I ſhall give the Paſſage at length. ‘ Moreover the Lord ſaith, becauſe ‘ the Daughters of *Zion* are haughty and walk ‘ with ſtretched forth Necks, walking and ‘ mincing as they go, and making a tinkling ‘ with their Feet. Therefore the Lord will ‘ ſmite with a ſcab the Crown of the Head ‘ of the Daughters of *Zion*, and the Lord will ‘ diſcover their ſecret parts. In that Day the ‘ Lord will take away the bravery of their ‘ tinkling Ornaments about their Feet, and ‘ their cauls and their round tires like the ‘ Moon; the chains, and the bracelets, and ‘ the mufflers; the bonnets and the ornaments ‘ of the Legs, and the head-bands, and the ‘ tablets and the ear-rings. The rings and noſe-

'noſe-jewels, the changeable Suits of Appa-
'rel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and
'the criſping pins. The glaſſes and the fine
'linnen, and the hoods and the vails. And
'it ſhall come to paſs that inſtead of ſweet
'ſmell there ſhall be a ſtink: and inſtead of
'a girdle a rent; and inſtead of well-ſet
'hair, baldneſs; and inſtead of a ſtomacher
'a girding of ſackcloth: and burning inſtead
'of Beauty. The Scab, the Stench, and the Burning are terrible peſtilential Symptoms, and our Ladies would do well to conſider, they may chance to reſemble thoſe of *Zion* in their Puniſhment as well as their Offence.

But Dreſs is not the only thing to be reformed. Sumptuary Laws are uſeful in many other Points. In former times the natural Plainneſs and good Senſe of the *Engliſh* made them leſs neceſſary. But ever ſince the luxurious Reign of King *Charles* the Second, we have been doing Violence to our Natures, and are by this time ſo much altered for the worſe, that it is to be feared, the very ſame Diſpoſitions that make them neceſſary, will for ever hinder their being Enacted or put in Execution.

A private Family in difficult Circumſtances, all Men agree, ought to melt down their Plate, walk on foot, retrench the number of their Servants, wear neither Jewels nor rich Cloaths, and deny themſelves expenſive Diverſions; and why not the Public? Had any thing like this been done, our Taxes had been leſs, or, which is the ſame thing, we ſhou'd have felt them leſs. But it is very remarkable,

that

that Luxury was never at ſo great a height, nor ſpread ſo generally through the Nation, as during the Expence of the late Wars and the heavy Debt that ſtill lieth upon us.

This Vice draweth after it a train of Evils which cruelly infeſt the Public: Faction, Ambition, Envy, Avarice, and that of the worſt kind, being much more hurtful in its conſequences, tho' not ſo infamous as Penury. It was the great art of Cardinal *Richelieu*, by encouraging Luxury and Expence to impoveriſh the *French* Nobility, and render them altogether dependent on the Crown, which hath been ſince very ſucceſsfully effected. Theſe and many more Conſiderations ſhew the neceſſity there is for Sumptuary Laws. Nor can any thing be ſaid againſt them in this Iſland, which might not with equal force be objected in other Countries, which have nevertheleſs judged the public benefit of ſuch Inſtitutions, to be of far greater importance than the ſhort ſufferings of a few who ſubſiſt by the Luxury of others.

It is evident, that old Taxes may be better born, as well as new ones raiſed by Sumptuary Laws judiciouſly framed, not to damage our Trade but retrench our Luxury. It is evident, that for want of theſe, Luxury (which, like other faſhions, never faileth to deſcend) hath infected all ranks of People, and that this enableth the *Dutch* and *French* to underſell us, to the great prejudice of our Traffic. We cannot but know that in our preſent circumſtances, it ſhould be our Care,

as

as it is our Intereſt, to make Poverty tolerable. In fine, we have the Experience of many Ages to convince us, that a corrupt luxurious People muſt of themſelves fall into Slavery, altho' no Attempt be made upon them. Theſe and the like obvious Reflexions ſhould, one would think, have forced any People in their Senſes upon frugal meaſures.

But we are doomed to be undone. Neither the plain Reaſon of the thing, nor the Experience of paſſed Ages, nor the Examples we have before our Eyes, can reſtrain us from imitating, not to ſay ſurpaſſing, the moſt corrupt and ruined People, in thoſe very points of Luxury that ruined them. Our Gaming, our Opera's, our Maſquerades, are, in ſpight of our Debts and Poverty, become the Wonder of our Neighbours. If there be any Man ſo void of all Thought and common Senſe, as not to ſee where this muſt end, let him but compare what *Venice* was at the League of *Cambray*, with what it is at preſent, and he will be convinced, how truly thoſe faſhionable Paſtimes are calculated to depreſs and ruine a Nation.

But neither *Venice* nor *Paris*, nor any other Town in any part of the World, ever knew ſuch an expenſive ruinous Folly as our Maſquerade. This alone is ſufficient to inflame and ſatisfy the ſeveral Appetites for Gaming, Dreſſing, Intriguing, luxurious Eating and Drinking. It is a moſt skilful Abridgment, the very Quinteſſence, the Abſtract, of all thoſe ſenſeleſs Vanities, that have ever been the

ruine

ruine of Fools and deteſtation of Wiſe Men. And all this under the notion of an elegant Entertainment hath been admitted among us: tho' it be in truth a Contagion of the worſt kind. The Plague, dreadful as it is, is an Evil of ſhort duration. Cities have often recovered and flouriſhed after it. But when was it known that a People broken and corrupted by Luxury recovered themſelves? Not to ſay, that general Corruption of Manners never faileth to draw after it ſome heavy Judgment of War, Famine or Peſtilence. Of this we have a freſh inſtance in one of the moſt debauched Towns of *Europe*. And no body knows how ſoon it may be our own Caſe. This elegant Entertainment is indeed ſuſpended for the preſent, but there remains ſo ſtrong a Propenſion towards it, that if the Wiſdom of the Legiſlature do not interpoſe, it will ſoon return with the additional temptation of having been forbid for a time. It were ſtupid and barbarous to declaim againſt keeping up the Spirit of the People by proper Diverſions. But then they ſhould be proper, ſuch as poliſh and improve their Minds or encreaſe the Strength and Activity of their Bodies: none of which Ends are anſwered by the Maſquerade, no more than by thoſe *French* and *Italian* Follies, which, to our ſhame, are imported and encouraged at a time, when the Nation ought to be too grave for ſuch Trifles.

It is not to be believed, what Influence public Diverſions have on the Spirit and Manners of a People. The *Greeks* wiſely ſaw this,

this, and made a very ſerious affair of their Public Sports. For the ſame reaſon, it will perhaps ſeem worthy the care of our Legiſlature, to regulate the Public Diverſions, by an abſolute Prohibition of thoſe which have a direct tendency to corrupt our Morals, as well as by a Reformation of the Drama: which, when rightly managed, is ſuch a noble entertainment, and gave thoſe fine Leſſons of Morality and good Senſe to the *Athenians* of old, and to our *Britiſh* Gentry about a Century ago: but for theſe laſt ſixty Years, hath entertained us, for the moſt part, with ſuch poor ſorry things as ſpoil, inſtead of improving, the Taſte and Manners of the Audience. Thoſe who are attentive to ſuch propoſitions only, as may fill their Pockets, will probably ſlight theſe things as Trifles below the care of the Legiſlature. But I am ſure, all Honeſt Thinking Men muſt lament to ſee their Country run headlong into all thoſe Luxurious Follies, which, it is evident, have been fatal to other Nations, and will undoubtedly prove fatal to us alſo, if a timely ſtop be not put to them.

PUBLIC SPIRIT, that Glorious Principle of all that is great and good, is ſo far from being cheriſhed or encouraged, that it is become ridiculous in this enlightened Age, which is taught to laugh at every thing that is ſerious as well as ſacred. The ſame Atheiſtical narrow Spirit, centring all our Cares upon private Intereſt, and contracting all our Hopes within the Enjoyment

of this preſent Life, equally produceth a neglect of what we owe to God and our Country. *Tully* hath long ſince obſerved, that it is impoſſible for thoſe, who have no belief of the Immortality of the Soul or a future State of Rewards and Puniſhments, to Sacrifice their particular Intereſts and Paſſions to the Public Good, or have a generous Concern for Poſterity: And our own Experience confirmeth the truth of this Obſervation.

In order therefore to recover a Senſe of Public Spirit, it is to be wiſhed that Men were firſt affected with a true Senſe of Religion: *Pro aris & focis* having ever been the great Motive to Courage and Perſeverance in a Public Cauſe.

It wou'd likewiſe be a very uſeful Policy, and warranted by the example of the wiſeſt Governments, to make the natural Love of Fame and Reputation ſubſervient to promoting that noble Principle. Triumphal Arches, Columns, Statues, Inſcriptions, and the like Monuments of Public Services, have in former times been found great Incentives to Virtue and Magnanimity, and would probably have the ſame effects on *Engliſhmen*, which they have had on *Greeks* and *Romans*. And, perhaps, a Pillar of Infamy would be found a proper and exemplary Puniſhment in caſes of ſignal Public Villany, where the loſs of Fortune, Liberty or Life are not proportioned to the Crime: or where the Skill of the Offender, or the Nature of his Offence, may skreen him from the Letter of the Law.

Several

Several of theſe are to be ſeen at *Genoa*, *Milan*, and other Towns of *Italy*, where it is the Cuſtom to demoliſh the Houſe of a Citizen, who hath conſpired the Ruin of his Country, or been guilty of any enormous Crime towards the Public, and in place thereof to erect a Monument of the Crime and Criminal deſcribed in the blackeſt manner. We have nothing of this ſort, that I know, but that which is commonly called the Monument: which in the laſt Age was erected for a trifle, in all its circumſtances and conſequences, if compared with the modern unexampled attempt of Men eaſy in their Fortunes, and unprovoked by Hardſhips of any ſort in cool Blood and with open Eyes to ruine their Native Country. This foul fact will never be forgotten, and it were to be wiſhed that with it the Public Deteſtation thereof may be tranſmitted to Poſterity, which would in ſome meaſure vindicate the Honour of the preſent and be an uſeful Leſſon to future Ages.

Thoſe noble Arts of Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting do not only adorn the Public, but have alſo an influence on the Minds and Manners of Men, filling them with great Ideas, and ſpiriting them up to an Emulation of worthy Actions. For this Cauſe they were cultivated and encouraged by the *Greek* Cities, who vied with each other in building and adorning their Temples, Theaters, Portico's and the like Public Works, at the ſame time that they diſcou-

raged private Luxury: the very reverſe of our Conduct.

To propoſe the building a Parliament Houſe, Courts of Juſtice, Royal Palace, and other Public Edifices ſuitable to the Dignity of the Nation, and adorning them with Paintings and Statues, which may tranſmit memorable Things and Perſons to Poſterity, would probably be laughed at as a vain Affair, of great Expence and little uſe to the Public; and it muſt be owned, we have reduced our ſelves to ſuch Straits, that any Propoſition of Expence ſuiteth ill with our preſent circumſtances. But how improper ſoever this Propoſal may be for the Times, yet it comes ſo properly into a Diſcourſe of Public Spirit, that I could not but ſay ſomething of it. And at another time it will not ſeem unreaſonable, if we conſider that it is no more than the wiſeſt Nations have done before us, that it would ſpirit up new Arts, employ many Hands, keep the Mony circulating at home, and laſtly, that it would be a notable inſtance of Public Spirit, as well as a Motive to it.

The ſame noble Principle may be alſo encouraged, by erecting an Academy of ingenious Men whoſe Employment it ſhould be to compile the Hiſtory of *Great Britain*, to make Diſcourſes proper to inſpire Men with a Zeal for the Public, and celebrate the Memory of thoſe who have been Ornaments to the Nation, or done it eminent Service. Not to mention, that this would improve our Language,

guage, and amuſe ſome buſy Spirits of the Age: which, perhaps, would be no ill Policy.

This is not without Example: for, to ſay nothing of the *French* Academy which is proſtituted to meaner Purpoſes, it hath been the Cuſtom of the *Venetian* Senate, to appoint one of their Order to continue the Hiſtory of the Republic. This was introduced in the flouriſhing State of that People, and is ſtill in force. We fall ſhort of other Nations in the number of good Hiſtorians, tho' no Nation in Chriſtendom hath produced greater Events, or more worthy to be recorded. The *Athenian* Senate appointed Orators to commemorate annually thoſe who died in defence of their Country, which Solemnity was performed at the Monuments erected in honour of them by the Public: and the Panegyrics compoſed by *Iſocrates* and *Pericles*, as well as many Paſſages in *Tully*, inform us with what pleaſure the ancient Orators uſed to expatiate in Praiſe of their Country.

Concord and Union among our ſelves is rather to be hoped for, as an Effect of public Spirit, than propoſed as a Means to promote it. Candid, generous Men, who are true Lovers of their Country, can never be Enemies to one half of their Countrymen, or carry their Reſentments ſo far as to ruine the Public for the ſake of a Party. Now I have fallen upon the mention of our Parties, I ſhall beg leave to inſert a Remark or two, for the Service

Service both of *Whig* and *Tory*, without entering into their reſpective Merits. *Firſt*, It is impoſſible for either Party to ruine the other, without involving Themſelves and their Poſterity in the ſame Ruine. *Secondly*, It is very feaſible for either Party to get the better of the other, if they could firſt get the better of themſelves; and inſtead of indulging the little womaniſh Paſſions of Obſtinacy, Reſentment, and Revenge, ſteadily promote the true Intereſt of their Country, in thoſe great clear Points of Piety, Induſtry, Sobriety of Manners, and an honeſt Regard for Poſterity; which, all Men of Senſe agree, are eſſential to public Happineſs. There would be ſomething ſo great and good in this Conduct, as muſt neceſſarily overbear all Calumny and Oppoſition. But that Men ſhould act reaſonably is rather to be wiſhed than hoped.

I am well aware, that to talk of public Spirit, and the Means of retrieving it, muſt to narrow ſordid Minds be matter of Jeſt and Ridicule, how conformable ſoever it be to right Reaſon and the Maxims of Antiquity. Tho' one would think, the moſt ſelfiſh Men might ſee it was their Intereſt to encourage a Spirit in others by which they, to be ſure, muſt be Gainers. Yet, ſuch is the Corruption and Folly of the preſent Age, that a public Spirit is treated like Ignorance of the World, and want of Senſe; and all the Reſpect is paid to cunning Men, who bend and wreſt the Public Intereſt to their own private Ends, that in other times hath been thought

thought due to thoſe who were generous enough to ſacrifice their private Intereſt to that of their Country.

Such Practices and ſuch Maxims as theſe muſt neceſſarily ruine a State. But if the contrary ſhould prevail, we may hope to ſee Men in Power prefer the public Wealth and Security to their own, and Men of Money make free Gifts or lend it without Intereſt to their Country. This, how ſtrange and incredible ſoever it may ſeem to us, hath been often done in other States. And the natural *Engliſh* Temper conſidered, together with the force of Example, no one can tell how far a Propoſal for a free Gift may go among the monied Men, when ſet on Foot by the Legiſlature, and encouraged by the Example of two or three Men of Figure, who have the Spirit to do a generous thing, and the Underſtanding to ſee it is every private Man's Intereſt to ſupport that of the Public.

If they who have their Fortunes in Money ſhould make a voluntary Gift, the Public would be eaſed, and at the ſame time maintain it's Credit. Nor is a generous Love of their Country the only Motive that ſhould induce them to this. Common Equity requireth that all Subjects ſhould equally ſhare the public Burthen. And common Senſe ſheweth, that thoſe who are foremoſt in the Danger ſhould not be the moſt backward in contributing to prevent it.

Before

Before I leave this Subject, I cannot but take notice of that moſt infamous Practice of Bribery, than which nothing can be more oppoſite to Public Spirit. Since every one who takes a Bribe, plainly owns that he prefers his private Intereſt to that of his Country. This Corruption is become a national Crime, having infected the loweſt as well as the higheſt among us, and is ſo general and notorious, that, as it cannot be matched in former Ages, ſo it is to be hoped it will not be imitated by Poſterity. This calls to mind another national Guilt which we poſſeſs in a very eminent degree: There being no Nation under the Sun where ſolemn Perjury is ſo common, or where there are ſuch Temptations to it. The making Men ſwear ſo often in their own Caſes, and where they have an Intereſt to conceal the Truth, hath gradually worn off that awful Reſpect which was once thought due to an Appeal to Almighty God: Inſomuch that Men now-a-days break their Faſt and a Cuſtom-houſe Oath with the ſame Peace of Mind. It is a Policy peculiar to us, the obliging Men to perjure or betray themſelves, and hath had no one good Effect, but many very ill Ones. Sure I am, that other Nations, without the hundredth part of our Swearing, contrive to do their Buſineſs, at leaſt as well as we do. And perhaps our Legiſlature will think it proper to follow their Example. For whatever Meaſures are taken, ſo long as we lie under ſuch a load of Guilt, as National Perjury and National Bribery, it is impoſſible we can proſper.

This

This poor Nation hath ſorely ſmarted of late, and to eaſe the preſent Smart, a ſudden Remedy (as is natural in ſuch caſes) hath been thought of. But we muſt beware not to miſtake an Anodyne for a Cure. Where the Vitals are touched, and the whole maſs of Humours vitiated, it is not enough to eaſe the part pained, we muſt look further and apply general Correctives; otherwiſe the ill humour may ſoon ſhew it ſelf in ſome other part.

The *South-Sea* Affair, how ſenſible ſoever, is not the original Evil or the great Source of our Misfortunes; it is but the natural Effect of thoſe Principles which for many Years have been propagated with great Induſtry. And as a ſharp Diſtemper by reclaiming a Man from Intemperance may prolong his Life, ſo it is not impoſſible but this public Calamity that lieth ſo heavy on the Nation may prevent its Ruine: It would certainly prove the greateſt of Bleſſings if it ſhould make all honeſt Men of one Party; If it ſhould put Religion and Virtue in countenance, reſtore a ſenſe of Public Spirit, and convince Men it is a dangerous folly to purſue private Aims in oppoſition to the Good of their Country; If it ſhould turn our Thoughts from Couſenage and Stock-jobbing to Induſtry and frugal Methods of Life; In fine, if it ſhould revive and inflame that native ſpark of *Britiſh* Worth and Honour which hath too long lain ſmothered and oppreſſed.

With this view I have, among ſo many Projects for remedying the ill ſtate of our Affairs in a particular Inſtance, ventured to pub-

liſh the foregoing general hints, which as they have been thrown together from a Zeal for the public Good, ſo I heartily wiſh they may be regarded neither more nor leſs than as they are fitted to promote that end.

Tho' it muſt be owned that little can be hoped if we conſider the corrupt degenerate Age we live in. I know it is an old folly to make peeviſh complaints of the Times, and charge the common failures of human Nature on a particular Age. One may nevertheleſs venture to affirm, that the preſent hath brought forth new and portentous Villanies, not to be parallel'd in our own or any other Hiſtory. We have been long preparing for ſome great Cataſtrophe. Vice and Villainy have by degrees grown reputable among us. Our Infidels have paſſed for fine Gentlemen, and our venal Traytors for Men of Senſe who knew the World. We have made a jeſt of Public Spirit, and cancelled all reſpect for whatever our Laws and Religion repute Sacred. The old *Engliſh* modeſty is quite worn off, and inſtead of bluſhing for our Crimes, we are aſhamed only of Piety and Virtue. In ſhort, other Nations have been wicked, but we are the firſt who have been wicked upon Principle.

The truth is, our Symptoms are ſo bad that notwithſtanding all the care and vigilance of the Legiſlature, it is to be feared the final Period of our State approaches. Strong Conſtitutions, whether politic or natural, do not feel light diſorders. But, when they are ſenſibly affected, the Diſtemper is for the moſt part vio-

violent and of an ill Prognoſtic. Free Governments like our own were planted by the *Goths* in moſt parts of *Europe*. And tho' we all know what they are come to, yet we ſeem diſpoſed rather to follow their Example, than to profit by it.

Whether it be in the order of things, that Civil States ſhould have, like natural Products, their ſeveral Periods of Growth, Perfection, and Decay: or whether it be an Effect, as ſeemeth more probable, of humane Folly, that as Induſtry produceth Wealth, ſo Wealth ſhould produce Vice, and Vice Ruine.

God grant the time be not near, when Poſterity ſhall ſay, 'This Iſland was once inhabited by a Religious, Brave, Sincere People, of plain uncorrupt Manners, reſpecting inbred Worth rather than Titles and Appearances, Aſſerters of Liberty, Lovers of their Country, jealous of their own Rights, and unwilling to infringe the Rights of others; Improvers of Learning and uſeful Arts, Enemies to Luxury, tender of other Mens Lives, and prodigal of their own; inferior in nothing to the old *Greeks* or *Romans*, and ſuperior to each of thoſe People in the Perfections of the other. Such were our Anceſtors during their Riſe and Greatneſs; but they degenerated, grew ſervile Flatterers of Men in Power, adopted *Epicurean* Notions, became venal, corrupt, injurious, which drew upon them the Hatred of God and Man, and occaſioned their final Ruine.

F I N I S.

FINIS.